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SUBJECT: UNSC: MONTHLY MEETING ON THE MIDDLE EAST

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**¶1.** (SBU) Summary: The Security Council held its monthly meeting on the Middle East on June 23. UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Serry briefed the Council and highlighted the concerted push to create the conditions for re-launching negotiations for a two state solution. He emphasized the unresolved crisis in Gaza but noted the drop in violence during the reporting period. He commended the peaceful holding of elections in Lebanon and hoped cabinet formation would take place expeditiously and calmly. Council members in the follow-on consultations echoed Serry's theme that now is a critical opportunity to move forward on the peace process and highlighted both President Obama's June 4 and Prime Minister Netanyahu's June 14 speeches and the upcoming Quartet meeting. Council members uniformly called for a complete freeze on settlement activities and pressed for implementation of UNSCR 1860 in Gaza. The Russian Perm Rep highlighted the Moscow conference and said it would not be a photo op but should "give real momentum" to the Israel-Palestinian track and provide a "horizon" for Israeli-Syrian and Israel-Lebanese talks. Council members also commended Lebanon for holding free and fair parliamentary elections and called for all parties to uphold Council resolutions on Lebanon. End summary.

UNSCO briefing to Council

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**¶2.** (SBU) UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) Robert Serry briefed the Council on June 23 during its monthly meeting on the Middle East. (Note: The full text of Serry's briefing can be found at [www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact2009.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scact2009.htm) and click on S/PV.6150 for June 23, 2009. End note.) He reviewed key developments in the region since the Council's last meeting on the subject on May 11. He noted the upcoming Quartet meeting and Arab Follow-up Committee meetings in Trieste; the Arab Foreign Ministers meeting in Cairo; and Prime Minister Netanyahu's meeting with Special Envoy Mitchell as a "concerted push to secure the required commitments and actions from the parties to create conditions for re-launching efforts for a two state solution." He referred to President Obama's June 4 speech and Prime Minister Netanyahu's June 14 acceptance of a Palestinian state "but under stringent conditions related to territory, security, refugees, Jerusalem, and the character of the State of Israel." He noted the Israeli government's failure to implement a freeze on settlement activity, despite the removal of three outposts, and the continuing settler violence directed at West Bank Palestinians.

**¶3.** (SBU) Serry noted Palestinian President Abbas' response to Netanyahu that there must be a settlement activity freeze before negotiations can resume and Prime Minister Fayyad's June 22 speech outlining the intention to build the institutions of a Palestinian state in two years. He stressed that the Palestinian Authority's (PA) immediate challenge is financial and called on all Member states to act

swiftly to fulfill pledges and commit to additional budget support for the PA. He called for Israel to ease closure measures. He referred to the PA's continuing efforts to reform its security services and criminal justice system and the violent confrontations with Hamas in the West Bank during the month. He stressed that "building Palestinian statehood on the basis of divided societies, separate institutions, and competing legitimacies is unsustainable." He called on Hamas to re-evaluate its position on the two-state solution, its use of violence against civilians, and its need to "commit to genuine political pluralism." He called on Fatah to reform internally.

¶4. (SBU) Serry underscored that the unresolved crisis in Gaza negatively impacts the peace process and everyday life in Gaza and UNSCR 1860 must be implemented. He noted that there was a drop in violence during the reporting period and believe there might be an opportunity to shift the dynamics. He commended Egyptian efforts to close down tunnels and confiscate weapons but noted Israel's assessment (which the Secretariat cannot independently verify) of the numbers of weapons that have entered Gaza since the end of the actual conflict: at least 330 mortars, 37 rockets, 40 anti-tank weapons, 46 anti-tank missiles, and 17 tons of explosives. He described how conditions for the civilian populations remain grave with the overall quantity and range of goods "grossly insufficient to support normal economic and social activity." He noted that no reconstruction materials have entered Gaza, though the Secretary-General did present a proposal to Defense Minister Barak to kick start UN construction work on housing, health, and education facilities which was developed in consultation with the PA

USUN NEW Y 00000624 002 OF 003

and the Gaza business community. He said Israel had named a new negotiator for CPL Shalit, whose third anniversary in captivity took place on June 22. Serry also mentioned that he had met with Justice Goldstone when he arrived in Gaza via the Rafah crossing and noted that Israel "has not extended cooperation to this mission."

¶5. (SBU) On the regional issues, he noted Special Envoy Mitchell's visits to Lebanon and Syria. He reiterated the Secretary-General's congratulations to the people of Lebanon for the peaceful conduct of parliamentary elections. Since the elections, he noted that "a climate of dialogue and cooperation has prevailed in Lebanon." He noted that with the Syrian Ambassador's arrival in Beirut on May 29, both countries now operate functioning embassies in each other's capitals. He briefly referred to the large number of arrests in Lebanon over allegations of spying for Israel, and the June 16 assassination of a low-ranking Fatah member in the Ain el-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp but said that the camp remains calm, as it did during the elections. He noted that the UNIFIL area of operations remained generally quiet, though Israeli air violations continued on an almost daily basis. He closed by describing the period ahead as an opportunity "to ensure that commitments made are commitments monitored and commitments kept."

Council consultations stress critical time to move forward on peace process

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¶6. (SBU) A majority of Council members during the Council's follow-on consultations on June 23 took up Serry's theme that now is a critical opportunity to move forward on the peace process. (Note: Ambassador Rice delivered U.S. remarks contained in reftel. End note.) Costa Rica, Mexico, Croatia, Uganda, France, Japan, Turkey, and the UK all welcomed the U.S. government's active efforts on the peace process, particularly President Obama's June 4 speech in Cairo. The French Perm Rep noted that rarely has there been such consensus on the need for resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Japan, Turkey, and Croatia called on both parties to adhere to their Road Map

obligations. The Russian Deputy Perm Rep stressed that negotiations between the two parties should not begin with "a clean slate" but should be on the basis of previous UN resolutions and the Road Map. The UK Perm Rep said that the European Union is ready to contribute to "post-conflict arrangements." The Russian Deputy Perm Rep noted that Russia is working with Israel and Jordan to provide security assistance to the PA.

¶ 17. (SBU) A large number of Council members also welcomed, though some more tepidly than others, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's June 14 address. The Russian Deputy Perm Rep noted that there were "some positives" in the address, including Netanyahu's stated willingness to negotiate on the basis of two states, but stressed that those two states must be viable. However, Council members unanimously stressed the need for a freeze on settlement activity, including natural growth. Many also called for an end to housing demolitions, especially in East Jerusalem.

¶ 18. (SBU) The Libyan Acting Perm Rep focused his remarks on the daily suffering of the Palestinian people. He quoted from President Obama's June 4 speech about Palestinian suffering and the rights of a Palestinian state to exist, just as does an Israeli state. He commented that he looked forward to the President's speech becoming policy. He characterized Prime Minister Netanyahu's June 14 speech as a response to President Obama's speech with Netanyahu clearly conditioning the existence of a Palestinian state as a demilitarized state without control of its airspace or borders, while Israel alone has the right to defensible borders and keeps Jerusalem as its unified capital. He commented that he does not see any solution on the horizon except at the expense of the Palestinian people but then noted that the Palestinian have nothing left to concede.

#### Gaza/Palestinian reconciliation

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¶ 19. (SBU) While some noted the drop in violence during the last month, many continued to voice concern about the continuing rockets attacks and Israeli actions in Gaza and called for a full implementation of UNSCR 1860, including the consolidation of a cease-fire and the re-opening of the crossings. The French Perm Rep reiterated the need for a monitoring mechanism at the crossings. Costa Rica called for greater access by UN officials to Gaza and an end to the illicit trafficking of arms into Gaza. Both the UK and France noted Israel CPL Shalit's continued captivity. The UK

USUN NEW Y 00000624 003 OF 003

Perm Rep noted his government's deep concern with regard to the breaches of international humanitarian law during the Gaza conflict. A number of states, including Turkey and Austria, commented on the need for Palestinian reconciliation and that there could be no viable Palestinian state without Gaza.

#### Arab and international efforts

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¶ 110. (SBU) Several members, including Japan, Austria, and France, called on the Arab states to move forward on the Arab Peace Initiative (API). Vietnam said that it was heartened by the Arab states' commitment to the API. A majority recognized the work of the Quartet and hoped that the June 26 Quartet meeting would further reinvigorate the process. The Russian Deputy Perm Rep said he believed the Quartet and Arab Follow-up Committee should meet on a regular basis. He elaborated on the Moscow conference, noting that the Russian government continues to work on "this important forum" which he stressed would not be a photo op. He said he believed it would happen this year and that it should "give real momentum" to the Israel-Palestinian track and provide a "horizon" for Israeli-Syrian and Israel-Lebanese talks.

Council members on Lebanon

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¶11. (SBU) Austria, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Mexico, Japan, Turkey, Vietnam, Uganda, Burkina Faso, and Russia specifically commended Lebanon for the holding of free and fair parliamentary elections on June 7 and hoped that Lebanon would continue on the path of reform and progress and fully implement UNSCR 1701. Vietnam, in a remarkably harsh overall statement towards Israel, commented that it was "irritated" by Israel's continued overflights of Lebanon.

RICE